THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

June/July 2022 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

Flags at Nativity School

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

For more than a year at Worcester's Jesuit-run Nativity School, Rainbow Pride and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) flags have flown, but, on April 3rd, Worcester's Bishop Robert McManus questioned whether the school is "committing itself to ideologies which are contrary to Catholic teaching" and if it is still truly a Catholic school.

School officials replied, "The Black Lives Matter and Pride flags fly below the American flag at our school to remind our young men, their families, and Nativity Worcester staff that all are welcome here and that they are valued and safe in this place."

Aiden Duffy

The bishop's remarks sparked wide spread criticism, especially since he has chosen not to speak out on nuclear disarmament, the climate emergency, gun control, racism, sexism, and immigration. Worcester also remains one of a shrinking number of dioceses that has not released the names of clergy accused of sexual abuse of children. The bishop chose to stay silent during the 301-day nurses' strike at Worcester's Saint Vincent Hospital. He did not join other faith leaders at Black Lives Matter marches or the anti-gun-violence March for Our Lives. Bishop McManus remained silent despite the fact that the US Catholic Conference of Bishops and the Vatican have written extensively on these issues. In this context, the bishop's opposition to the rainbow and BLM flags strikes many as more loyal to the right-wing culture war than to Catholic teaching.

Ironically, Nativity School, which offers free, high-quality education, mostly to people of color, closely models the mission ideals of the founder of the Jesuits, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, unlike most of today's Jesuit schools, which cater to the wealthy. My alma mater, the College of the Holy Cross, for example, costs over $60,000 to attend. The largest number of low-income students are enrolled in ROTC, a military training program that graduates students into the nuclear-armed navy. Given the Vatican's condemnation of the possession of nuclear weapons, I cannot help but ask, "Why is ROTC not considered contrary to Catholic teaching?"

In its April 2022 newsletter, The Los Angeles Catholic Worker stated: "Though there are many crucial issues in our world today that move our hearts and deserve our attention, we know that if we do not end fossil fuel use and immediately transform the climate crisis we have helped create, and also conscientiously work to dismantle all nuclear weapons, a certain, horrifying, imminent end awaits God's creation."

Pope Francis, who prioritizes nonviolence, nuclear disarmament, and the climate emergency, approaches the issues differently. Without contradicting Catholic teaching on the sanctity of

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Love Proposed from Below:

Recovering the Russian Orthodox Tradition of Peace

by Michael Centore

Editor's Note: Reprinted with permission from Today's American Catholic.

For those of us with a deep love of Russian Orthodox spirituality, the events of the past month, heartbreaking enough on their own, have brought additional grief. We mourn the warping of the Russian Orthodox faith for nefarious nationalistic ends. We see Patriarch Kirill's capitulation to the violent messianism of Vladimir Putin as a tragic case of succumbing to a false god. We pray for the intercession of saints like Seraphim of Sarov, the monk who fed bears by hand outside of his hermitage in the forest, who pleaded with a judge for mercy on behalf of a group of robbers who beat him senselessly and left him for dead, who counseled his followers to "Acquire a peaceful spirit, and thousands around you will be saved."

In the early days of the invasion, I kept a book of icons open on my desk. On the verso page was an icon of Saint Paisy Velichkovsky, a Ukrainian by birth, and on the recto, Saint Ambrose of Optina, a Russian. There is a gentleness in Saint Ambrose's eyes that is hard to put into words. The icon itself, even in reproduction, seems to quiver with

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Flags

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sacramental marriage between a woman and a man, Francis also condemns violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and race. He singled out the Black Lives Matter movement for praise. The request to remove the flags at Nativity School could be misinterpreted as a green light for violence against two groups who have endured long histories of oppression. With that in mind, the Nativity School staff declined the bishop's request to take the flags down. For the first time, the bishop will not attend the graduation at Holy Cross College, where the Jesuits who teach at Nativity live.

On May 6, Bishop McManus released an open letter entitled "Why symbols matter," in which he said that the gay pride flag implies support for sexual relationships that the Church does not condone. He went on to say, "Because every human life is sacred, the Church is 100% behind the phrase 'black lives matter.' However, a specific movement with a wider agenda has co-opted the phrase and promotes a 13-principle agenda for schools which includes... 'queer affirming' and 'trans affirming.'"

The bishop concluded: "No one can deny that we are still living in turbulent times during which racism rears its ugly head, and the rights and dignity of Black men and women are often denied. While we share in wanting all our students, in particular our black and brown inner-city students, to feel safe and welcome, we must abide by the moral axiom that 'the ends do not justify the means.' It is my fervent prayer that Nativity School will decide to display only banners which complement the cross of Christ which tells them that they are loved. Flags bearing the words 'End Racism' and 'We are all God's children' would be far more appropriate for a Catholic school."

While I appreciate the bishop's condemnation of racism, I wish he had overtly condemned violence against LGBTQ people as well. I do not agree that the BLM flag is commonly understood as more than opposition to violence against people of color, especially violence by police officers. The bishop's alternative flag suggestions remind me of signs promoting "All Lives Matter," an alternative to BLM that diminishes the urgency of the threat to Black people.

Many people display the gay pride flag to demonstrate their opposition to discrimination and violence against LGBTQ people, just as many people display the American flag to support American ideals of social justice, but people also use both symbols to say other things, particularly the Stars and Stripes. It is increasingly used to express white-pride and anti-democratic values. The Jesuits at Nativity have clarified what they intend the gay pride and BLM flags to say.

In contrast, Bishop McManus has not clarified why he is silent about so many other Catholic social issues. Meanwhile, the racist mass killing in Buffalo underscores 2022 FBI data showing a marked increase in hate crimes against Black people. Also, in January, *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* set the doomsday clock at 100 seconds, the closest to nuclear Armaggedon in decades. Revelations 3:15 counsels us not to be lukewarm. Like Pope Francis, we must speak out.

For my part, I thank God that the Jesuits at Nativity are welcoming everyone with assurances that their school is a place of safety and love. Given the United States' history of genocide against native people, systemic racism, corporate greed, and war, I have more questions about a Catholic institution flying the American flag than either of the other flags at Nativity. Ω

Narrow the Abortion Divide

Keath Haring

To the Editor [of *The Boston Globe*],
As a Catholic pacifist who has been jailed for civil disobedience, I do not favor advancing morality via criminalization, but I was taken aback by the Globe's front-page headline on the probable overturning of *Roe v. Wade*: "Most-vulnerable likely hardest hit by new restrictions." In 2020, 861 women in the US died of maternal causes while in 2019, the last year of available statistics, 629,981 unborn children were aborted. Unwanted pregnancies result from many causes—failure of men to respect women, failure of birth control, failure to use birth control, and failure of the US to provide living wages, affordable healthcare, housing, child care, and other services—but the unique individual conceived during every pregnancy bears no responsibility for those failures, is completely defenseless, and most vulnerable to death.

Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

Editor's Note: In today's highly polarized climate, it comes as no surprise that The Globe *chose not to publish this letter. Like Peter Maurin, who wanted to build a world where it is easier to be good, we wish pro-life and pro-choice advocates would come together to reduce abortions by promoting conditions to make pregnancy, birth, and child care less onerous.*

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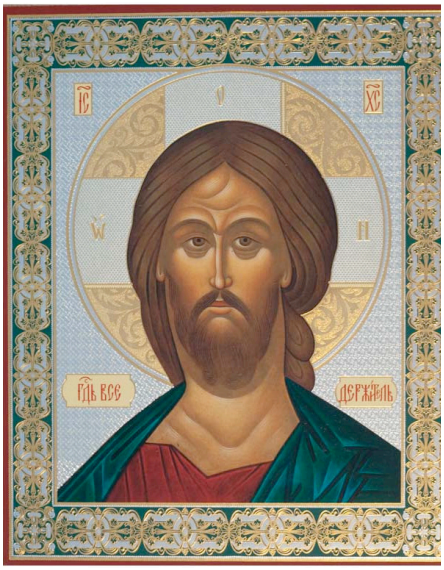
Russian Peace

(Continued from Page 1)

tenderness, as though the saint were on the verge of tears. Ambrose was the model for Father Zosima, the spiritual father to Alyosha Karamazov in Fyodor Dostoevsky's **The Brothers Karamazov.** One phrase from this fictional character contains more truth than all the sham sophistries of our real-life warmongers:

"*Every one of us is undoubtedly responsible for all men—and everything on earth, not merely through the general sinfulness of creation, but each one personally for all mankind and every individual . . . . Only through that knowledge, our heart grows soft with infinite, universal, inexhaustible love*."



Or this, which seems especially prescient given the Russian justification for the war as defending "traditional" Christian values against a decadent, secular West:

"*Hate not the atheists, the teachers of evil, the materialists—and I mean not only the good ones—for there are many good ones among them, especially in our day—hate not even the wicked ones. Remember them in your prayers thus: Save, O Lord, all those who have none to pray for them, save too all those who will not pray. And add: it is not in pride that I make this prayer, O Lord, for I am lower than all . . . .*"

In a speech at the dedication of the Pushkin Monument in Moscow in June 1880, Dostoevsky addressed the theme of "Holy Russia" and Russia's special mission to the world. Though some of its reactionary, religiously nationalistic language has not aged well, and its calls for a nebulously defined "universalism" threaten to erase the particularities of human persons, Dostoevsky's speech is notable for its language of nonviolence:

"To become a true Russian, to become a Russian fully, (in the end of all, I repeat) means only to become the brother of all men, to become, if you will, a universal man. . . . our destiny is universality, won not by the sword, but by the strength of brotherhood and our fraternal aspiration to unite mankind" [emphasis mine].

It is not through conquering or invasion, but through a sort of radical humility ("Let our country be poor, but this poor land 'Christ traversed with blessing, in the garb of a serf'") that the Russian aspires "to include within our soul by brotherly love all our brethren, and at last, it may be, to pronounce the final Word of the great general harmony, of the final brotherly communion of all nations in accordance with the law of the gospel of Christ." Love proposed from below, not violence imposed from above, is what will rectify the divisions between nations and bring about lasting peace.

In addition to praying for the victims of the Ukrainian invasion as well as all victims of war, I find myself praying that Patriarch Kirill will experience that softening of heart so palpable in the icon of Saint Ambrose. I return to words of another patriarch, Ignatius IV of Antioch, who expressed a vision for "a church that does not maintain itself in a survivalist conservatism and in an ethnic and linguistic particularism, a church dispersed like salt, seeking its identity in its vocation." This is the church we so desperately need today: one that is unafraid to make itself small, to break itself apart into humble daily acts of service, to resist the rhetoric of centralizing nationalisms. Pope Francis expressed as much in a phone call with Kirill earlier this month. Rejecting the justification of the invasion as a "holy war," he said, "The Church must not use the language of politics, but the language of Jesus." Ω

A Dream in Wartime

by David Williams

Nothing is plumb
but the child
who, dangling, climbs
into the well

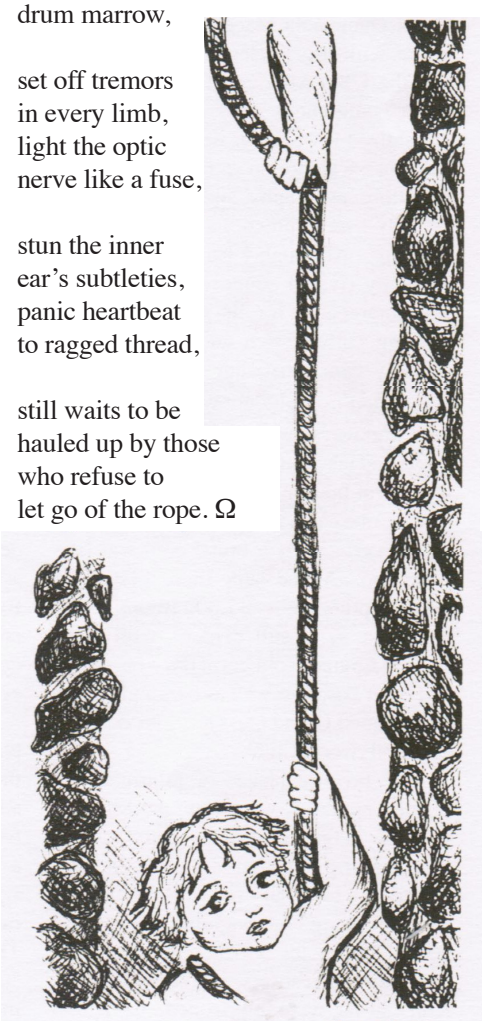
to patch the cracked,
shifted, settled
circle of cut,
fitted stones,

and even while random
blasts overhead
punch lung, gut,
drum marrow,

set off tremors
in every limb,
light the optic
nerve like a fuse,

stun the inner
ear's subtleties,
panic heartbeat
to ragged thread,

still waits to be
hauled up by those
who refuse to
let go of the rope. Ω

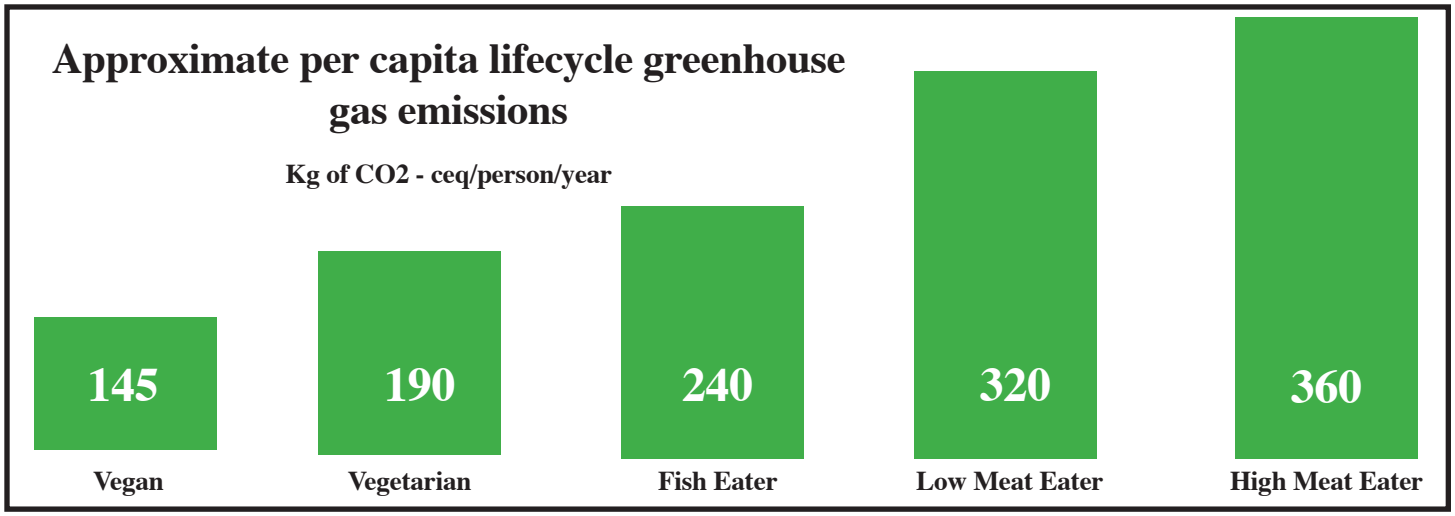


Grace Duffy

Editor's Note: Reprinted from **Traveling Mercies**, *Alice James Books, 1993.*

Fight Climate Change with Diet Change

from Vasu Murti



Editor's Note: Vasu Murti is a writer and activist with degrees in physics and applied mathematics from the University of California. He has written on animal rights, nuclear power, handgun control, abortion, illegal immigration, and drug legalization. The following is taken from a pamphlet by the Factory Farming Coalition, which Murti sent to us.

As the clock keeps ticking on climate change, with no action from the federal government in sight,...there's one area where our individual choices make a concrete difference—food....

There are over 9 billion animals bred and slaughtered in the US annually for food. That means there are more farmed animals raised every year in the US than there are people on the entire planet. Raising all these animals...causes a lot of problems.

...For every 100 grams of protein we put into feeding animals raised for food, we get back only 40 grams of protein from chicken, 10 grams from pork, and 5 grams from beef. This is a colossal waste of resources.

In fact, if we cut global meat consumption in half and used all of that farmland to grow fruits and vegetables for people to eat directly—instead of growing corn and soy to feed animals on factory farms—we could feed every single person on earth today, plus an extra 2 billion people!....

When we think about ways to save water, we usually think of taking shorter showers or not watering our lawns. But the single best way to save water is actually through our food choices....

In California—where much of the country's food comes from—consumers use 4% of the water, while the meat and dairy industry uses over 45%. Why is this? The animals themselves, the feed crops fed to the animals, and slaughter and processing all require tremendous amounts of water.

As a result, ordering a veggie burger instead of a hamburger just one time saves as much water as not showering for a whole month.

To make matters worse, factory farms pollute the remaining water. Farm animals produce 100 times as much waste as all the humans in the US. ...[Animal urine and feces goes] into giant, open-air pits.... To empty the pits, corporations spray the liquefied waste onto surrounding land, but sometimes the spray wafts downwind and onto neighbors. ...The waste also runs off into local streams and rivers. Runoff from factory farms is one of the leading causes of water pollution in the US. It has polluted 35,000 miles of river in 22 states....

All of the manure runoff and ensuing algae blooms also end up in the ocean, contributing to the over 8,000-square-mile dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico where no life can flourish.

Meat production is also a leading cause of climate change. A report from the United Nations found that meat production makes more greenhouse gases than all the planes, trains, and cars in the world combined.... Ruminant animals, like cows and sheep, burp methane—which is 28 times more potent than CO^2. And all of the deforestation for grazing land decreases the amount of trees removing CO^2 from the atmosphere. [According to Brett Cobley, Chef and author of **What Vegans Eat**, "In the Amazon Basin, the equivalent of 10,000 football fields are cut down per day due to animal farming."]

In order to limit global warming to 2ºC, the level scientists have agreed is necessary to avoid the potential collapse of human society, we must address the impacts of our diet.... If meat consumption continues on its current trajectory, in order to maintain the 2ºC target, we would need to shrink the carbon footprint of every other sector—transportation, industry, energy—down to zero....

A study published in the *Journal of Environmental Science and Technology* found that if the average person were to replace just one-quarter of their red meat consumption with vegan protein, it would reduce greenhouse gas emissions as much as buying local food 100% of the time. Ω

Editor's Note: This item is updated from the April/May 2014 Catholic Radical

Do As We Say, Not As We Do

"It is not appropriate to invade a country and dictate, at the end of a barrel of a gun, what you are trying to achieve."

US Secretary of State John Kerry
March 4, 2014, regarding Russia's intervention in Ukraine

US Military Interventions

Mexico- 1846-48, 1914-18, 1923
Argentina- 1890
Chile- 1891, 1973
Haiti- 1891, 1914-34, 1994, 2004-05
Hawaii- 1893
Nicaragua- 1894, 1896, 1898, 1899, 1907, 1912-23, 1981-90
China- 1894-95, 1898-1900, 1922-34
Korea- 1894-96, 1904-05, 1951-
Panama- 1895, 1901-14, 1918-20, 1925, 1958, 1964, 1989-90
Philippines- 1898-1910, 1948-53
Cuba- 1898-1902, 1912, 1917-33, 1961, 1962
Puerto Rico- 1898-
Guam- 1898-
Samoa- 1899
Honduras- 1903, 1907, 1912, 1919, 1924-25
Dominican Republic- 1903-04, 1914, 1916-24, 1965-66
Texas- 1915
Russia- 1918-22
Yugoslavia - 1919, 1992-94, 1999
Guatemala- 1920, 1954, 1966-67
Turkey- 1922
Mexico- 1923
El Salvador- 1932, 1981-92
Iran- 1946, 1953, 1980, 1988-87
Uruguay- 1947
Greece- 1947-49
Egypt- 1956
Lebanon- 1958, 1982-84
Vietnam- 1960-1975
Laos- 1962, 1971-73
Iraq- 1963, 1990-2012
Indonesia- 1965
Cambodia- 1969-75
Oman- 1970
Angola- 1976-92
Grenada- 1983-84
Libya- 1986, 2011
Bolivia- 1986
Virgin Islands- 1989
Saudi-Arabia- 1990-91, 2019-20
Kuwait- 1991
Somalia- 1992-94, 2006-18,2022-
Bosnia- 1993
Zaire (Congo)- 1996-97
Sudan- 1998
Afghanistan- 1998, 2001-2021
Macedonia- 2001
Yemen- 2002, 2009-
Colombia- 2003-2016
Liberia- 2003
Pakistan- 2005
Syria- 2008, 2014-20
Niger- 2017
Ukraine-2022?

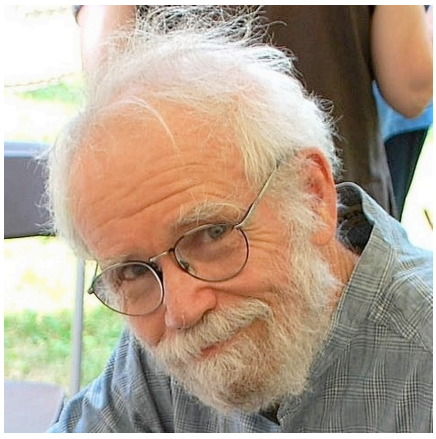
Letters

At risk of setting a precedent for *The Catholic Radical*, whose supporters all deserve a shout out on their 75th birthday, please join Scott, Claire, and me in wishing a happy 75th on May 27 to a man I am increasingly unable to distinguish from a folk-singing saint, although this just possibly makes him a folk-singing Christian, and maybe just a folk-singer. Nevada has taxed and legislated mere Christian kindness out of existence in the Nevada Department of Corrections. So perhaps my 42 years here in prison has left me too easily impressed. However, where I am generally skeptical of saints, f not having personally witnessed the requisite miracles, as best I can tell Charlie King is the miracle himself, and readily demonstrable as one. A dedicated Catholic, he went into the guitar-strumming business believing music could make the world a better place, and then made it so himself. One needs only to know him.

Perhaps you can recall a person who makes your own life better, expecting neither to be thanked nor to be remembered but only to have helped. If so, just maybe there has been a Charlie King in all our lives at some point, not because that is the nature of the world but because that's the nature of Charlie. If not, you might keep an eye out for him. Being 74 did not slow him down, so being 75 is unlikely to do so.

Happy birthday, Music Man, and many more.

Richard Deeds
Indian Springs, Nevada



Editor's Note: Charlie King is a wonderful musical storyteller in the tradition of Pete Seeger, Utah Phillips, and Woody Guthrie. Those who have not had the privilege to hear his music should listen online to him singing "Our Life is More than Our Work." All his original compositions are priceless.

Dear Scott,
I was just thinking of you and Claire and your CW this week since I also received your newsletter. I said I ought to drop you a line as I appreciate receiving the newsletter from you. Thank you! What a blessing that is! Truly! It makes me feel less isolated as a CW! I pray for you all!

Yes, the principles are just a guide but the reality is no candidate can measure up to such a bar. Yes, "inching society toward the Gospel" is, for a lack of a better word, "practical."

I hope the Philippines will emerge out of its nightmare. For one, more than forty thousand people, by unofficial accounts, have been killed since 2016. There is a good chance that the family of the former dictator will be elected, coupled with the family of the present murderous regime in the upcoming May 2022 elections. I am tired of crying over many lost lives, and the grinding poverty that has gotten worse since the beginning of the pandemic.... We must choose better candidates for office, but the polls, hopefully wrong, seem to indicate the worse-case scenario. The good thing here is that the Roman Catholic Church bishops, many clergy, and laity have been vocal in upholding Gospel values as a guide.

Please pray for us.

Noel Bordador
Nazareth House Catholic Worker
Manila, Philippines

Dear Scott and Claire,
Thank you so much for this edition of our much loved *Catholic Radical*. This one particularly touches our hearts, as we have worked with orphaned children in South Central Russia for more than 20 years. At this moment, we are preparing to send the president of our nonprofit organization, SupportingOrphans.org, to Poland, to assist in the transition of orphaned Ukrainian children who are at risk of being trafficked by unscrupulous people as their parents have been killed in the bombings. We would GRATEFULLY appreciate your prayers and support in this delicate mission. One of our stalwart volunteers, David Maher, is also a strong supporter of your ministry. May God richly bless you in all that you do!

Michele Connor
Brookfield, Massachusetts

Dear Scott,
Thanks for the latest "Radical." I really appreciated [the poem] "But No."

Our hearts gone frigid
through and through,
the needy fret us not,
until we realize deep inside
our sibling's on the spot.

Our Lord has given us hearts of flesh, yet we have let them become hard like our old hearts. Lord have mercy.

John Howland, M.D.
Southbridge, Massachusetts

What can one say, Claire, about your latest piece on the war in the Ukraine? It was written with deep concern and passion. A while back, I was expressing my anguish with a CW associate over-seeing photos of apartment buildings having been bombed by the onslaught from Putin and the Russian military. His sad comment was reminding me of our "shock and awe" in Baghdad — we did the same in Iraq... (and other places as well). I find hope in praying the psalms as Dorothy did, and telling myself and others that LOVE will win out. God's urgent call to us is "no more war!"

Father Joe Mattern
Omro, Wisconsin

Dear friends,
The Catholic Radical is one of two journals which I read each month cover to cover, and you have this month produced another magnificent issue, promoting peace and active nonviolence in a time of war fever, reminding us of the humanity of the Russian people.

Then there is the annual April Fool's issue contained within it. That's another story.

I appreciate the lampoon of the seemingly never-ending series of emerging COVID virus variants, each requiring its own vaccine. The last paragraph, though, playing off a political stereotype, strikes me as violent, mean-spirited, and tasteless, literally imagining the stifling of a well-known objector's right to free speech and (presumably) breath with an elephant's trunk. Has the author no idea within what a cocoon s/he writes? Has s/he actually checked what that much-maligned but honest dissident has to say in this biggest of global big power games? There is more than one sort of war and one sort of weapon.

All the best,

Daniel Marshall
New York, New York

Editor's Note: Catholic Workers tend to be skeptical of popular views held by large majorities. Experience has taught us that governments, corporations, and other institutions often propose compelling arguments which turn out to be laden with misinformation and deceit, especially when profit, nationalism, and militarism are involved. Daniel Marshall and two other Catholic Worker friends are strong opponents of COVID vaccines. One of them is also an opponent of genetically-modified food. She gave a presentation at Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker that persuaded us to believe that genetic modification is reckless, despite the fact that a majority of mainstream medical institutions say GMOs are safe. Two of our CW friends have sent us volumes of information in support of their opposition to COVID vaccines. While we have not read every item, what we have read and fact-checked did not persuade us.

We acknowledge that the initial promise that the COVID vaccines would produce immunity have proven to be incorrect. Vaccinated people can contract Covid as Claire and Scott did. But, unlike Scott's sister who had a brutally difficult and prolonged case of COVID before vaccines were available, Claire and Scott had mild cases and with short symptoms.

On January 21, 2022, the CDC reported that in October-November "unvaccinated persons had 13.9 and 53.2 times the risk for infection and COVID-associated death, respectively, compared with fully vaccinated persons who received booster doses, and 4 and 12.7 times the risks compared with fully vaccinated people without booster doses." Factcheck.org, a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, reported on February 9, 2022 that unvaccinated adults were 97 times more likely to die from COVID than boosted adults. On March 28, 2022, ABC News released an extensive article by Arielle Mitropulus, showing that death rates for COVID were 38% higher in Republican-dominated states where politicians hindered or banned masks and discouraged vaccination. A Center for Disease Control and Prevention report, released on April 24, 2022, concluded unvaccinated children aged 5-11 are twice as likely to be hospitalized with Covid than those who are vaccinated. On May 14, 2022, the CDC reported that at least 312,000 people, who died from Covid since June 2021, were likely to have survived had they been vaccinated. Lower vaccination rates led and still lead to dramatically more deaths. We find these conclusions to be persuasive.

In that context, we included a column in our April Fools Day spoof which poked fun at the seemingly endless procession of new COVID variants and suggested that the anti-vaccine leader, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., is ignoring evidence that is as plain as the nose on his face. While we acknowledge that all vaccines and medications come with risks, we believe that Mr. Kennedy's estimation of the harm and potential lethality of COVID vaccines is a gross exaggeration. We also believe his continued high-profile vaccine opposition costs lives.

We never meant to silence Mr. Kennedy or to insult those who believe his allegations. We recognize that future medical studies may convince us to reconsider our position, but, with what we know now, we feel an urgent moral responsibility to encourage everyone to get fully vaccinated against COVID.

Thank you Catholic radicals! I read your April/May issue with its plenitude of letters to the editor. It is important that we are clear and firm now on the non-violence of real Christianity. To be steady and consistent on this issue, it is imperative to proclaim the entire Gospel. That gives strength and clarity.

The Peace Pledge Union had a million members in Britain around 1930. When Hitler came along, 99% ditched their convictions and joined the military.

It takes a real faith to take the peaceful path when you are up against a madman like that. To be a different kind of soldier is perhaps part of the solution; as the Early Christians said, "We belong to a different army."

I know many who chose alternative service during World War II and did not regret it, including my father.

Yes, Ukraine is part of a heart-wrenching, tragic, and stupid pattern but much more real to the public than Iraq or the Congo.

Simon Mercer
Saugerties, New York

Catholic Worker Calendar

June 1 & 15 , July 6 & 20 - Evening Prayer: Please join us for prayer & Taize chant. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow. 7 PM

International Catholic Worker Gathering- October 21-23: Please mark your calendars now to set aside time to celebrate the Mustard Seed Catholic Worker's 50th anniversary and to look ahead as a movement. College of the Holy Cross, Worcester. More information soon.

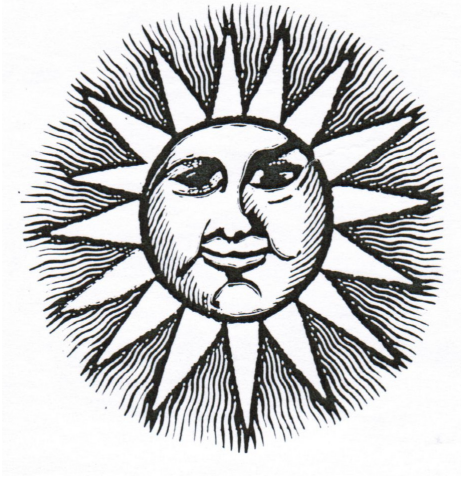
Mason Street Musings

Early May brought the blooming of the ornamental crab apple tree in the lot behind our house. Upstairs on the back porch, our guests would marvel each morning at the slow-motion show of glory. Tiny leaves the color of limes speared out from twig and branch, then came the swelling of small red berries, and finally, as if touched by a magic wand, the tree exploded into white blossoms. For a week, a snow-white cloud hovered over the garden.

The poet and artist William Blake is said to have had childhood visions. At age four, he saw God "put his head to the window," and when he was nine, while walking in the woods one day, he saw a tree filled with angels. Looking at the ornamental crab apple, I believe such visions.

Two days of wind blew away the tree's blossoms. Now, other actors take center stage. The lilac bush gives off its heady scent, its flowers the same hue of purple as the feathery blooms capping the chives. Peas, strawberries, lettuce, and kale stretch skyward. It's quite a show out back.

There's lots of commotion inside the house as well. After two years of slow-motion hospitality due to COVID, the



pace has quickened. Friends and visitors are coming for short visits, and we are receiving more requests from homeless women than ever before. Sometimes between four and six in a day. Yesterday, I spoke to a woman who told me she was camping in the deep woods. She had fled an abusive relationship in Florida and was trying to make a life for herself in Massachusetts. This evening, I fielded a call from a woman who spent last night on the streets.

Worcester is undergoing a development boom. Rents are going up and the pool of affordable housing dwindling, which might explain the rising tide of need. Many Americans fear such tides. They don't want immigrants flooding the border. They don't want poor people pouring into the neighborhood.

Tides, however, can be a good thing. They bring revelations.

I recently listened to a radio interview of a young woman from Poland. Three million Ukrainian refugees have surged into the country these past three months, and she was among the many Poles assisting them. The woman spoke impeccable English. She was pursuing a law degree and working a corporate job which she planned to leave soon. Being with the refugees had "completely changed" her perspective on life. When the war ends, she wants to help rebuild Ukraine, and after that, other regions.

I have visions for improving our back lot. I am seeing chickens, not angels, three to be precise, clucking contentedly in the far corner. And flourishing patches of blue lobelia and bergamot for the pollinators, and maybe some tingling chimes hanging in the crab apple tree. There is so much trouble and loss in the world, I want to cultivate a place where weary beings (monarch butterflies included) can rest, a green and growing spot where there's no denying the holy glory of life.

For more than two years, generous donations from you, dear readers, have enabled us to keep house and garden going without a financial care. The coffers now run low. The weekly cost of food and monthly bills run high, so we come begging. We appreciate your gifts and always need your prayers. Happy summer.

Claire

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